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ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE PAPAL ENCYCLICAL.

I PROPOSE in these pages simply to place in relief the ethical principles underlying the Encyclical of the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., on the burning question of labor in its relations with capital, making such comments and giving such illustrations as may occur. The document is one that has been received with a due sense of appreciation by thinking men of all classes and all creeds throughout the civilized world. Perhaps, never in the history of the Church did papal utterance receive more profound consideration than did this magnificent Encyclical. A short study of the document will enable us to understand its wide-spread influence and its deep impression.

I.

Speaking with all the authority of the Church, the Holy Father bears to the workingman, the poor, and the indigent a message of hope and comfort and prudent counsel as regards their temporal welfare. He holds that while the mission of the Church is primarily that of saving souls, her solicitude none the less extends with sincere concern to the well-being of the body:

“Neither must it be supposed that the solicitude of the Church is so occupied with the spiritual concerns of its children as to neglect their interests temporal and earthly. Its desire is that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty

and wretchedness, and should better their condition in life; and for this it strives." *

In pointing out the way by which men may seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, the Church is also leading towards the further promise that all things else shall be added thereto. Certainly, the experience of all time is that virtuous living is the only road to real personal happiness, and not infrequently the safest road to material prosperity. And the prosperity so attained is the most abiding. The wealth that is accumulated rapidly by forcing the weaker competitor to ruin and starvation, the wealth that is made at the expense of the widow and the orphan, the wealth that is coined out of the sweat and the blood, the pains and the aches and the groans of the ill-paid and ill-fed workman, or mayhap of the poor girl, whose starving life is ground into it,—that wealth can bring with it neither happiness nor the prosperity that is a blessing to the land. Such injustice carries with it its own curse.

The vital problem of the day is twofold: the amelioration of the condition of the poor and the workingman, and the proper adjustment of labor and capital. To the solution of this problem does the Pope address himself in the present timely and thought-suggesting Encyclical. His Holiness begins by surveying the ground:

"All agree, and there can be no question whatever, that some remedy must be found, and quickly found, for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the very poor. . . . By degrees it has come to pass that workingmen have been given over, isolated and defenceless, to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition. The evil has been increased by rapacious usury. . . . And to this must be added the custom of working by contract, and the concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself." †

The picture is not overdrawn, especially as regards the poor and the workingman of Europe.

* Encyclical Letter, § 30.

† Encycl., § 3.

True it is that with us in the United States there is not the festering and hopeless misery that is to be found among the very poor in the Old World; but poverty is none the less rampant; men and women there are who are overworked and underpaid, and living is high-priced, and in New York City, as well as in the heart of London, what is called "the sweating system" prematurely extinguishes the lives of women and children. Misery there is among us, and to spare.* There are cancer-spots on our social body. Neither science, nor the education of the people, nor the progress of industry can heal these spots. We may diminish the evil by a sympathizing activity exercised in a spirit of Christ-like charity towards the suffering; to attempt to eradicate it were utopian.

The Holy Father indulges in no such dream. He takes a practical view of things. He finds in the antagonism between labor and capital the source of many evils. The remedy he conceives to lie in the proper adjustment of labor and capital. Labor is necessary for capital; capital is necessary for labor. Each is in itself a good. It has been truly written, "Capital is not the begetter of misery, and the right and lawfulness of its participation cannot be gainsaid."† Owing to the rapid progress of science, the substitution of machinery for tools has broken up the harmony between many of the industries, and has imperceptibly placed the relations of labor and capital upon a footing for which men were not prepared, and in which the laborer, in consequence, suffered. A man's tools were part of his personality; the vast and perfect machinery of a large manufactory is something impersonal. What the skilled tradesman formerly accomplished is now the work of so many hands,—frequently the hands of feeble women and children. Life in the mean time continues to be conducted on the old social lines. Both capitalist and workingman have been unable to keep pace with the rapid changes brought about by the new order of things and

* See "How the Other Half Live," by Jacob A. Riis; see, also, "Chicago's Dark Places."

† E. Feno, "Della Carità Preventiva," Milano, 1868, p. 554.

to accommodate themselves to the new environment. Hence the strain and the clashings.

But there enter into the adjustments of labor and capital many elements arising from the relative responsibilities assumed by the employer and the employed upon entering into a contract. These elements are dealt with in the Encyclical. It is with no faltering voice that Leo XIII. approaches the great issue. He speaks as one possessing authority and knowing whereof he speaks.*

I I.

To begin with: The Holy Father is outspoken with the workingman, and cautions him against the delusory arguments of demagogues—"crafty agitators"—who "constantly make use of these disputes to pervert men's judgments, and to stir up the people to sedition."† He impresses upon the workingman a sense of obligation and responsibility towards the employer. He tells him that he should furnish wholly and faithfully the work stipulated for; that he should carry out honestly and well all equitable agreements freely entered into; that he should never injure capital or outrage the person of an employer; that he should never make use of violence in representing his own cause, or engage in riot or disorder; finally, that he should have nothing to do with men of evil principles, "who work upon the people with artful promises, and raise foolish hopes which usually end in disaster and repentance when too late."‡ There is always danger in reaction. Mr. Herbert Spencer says, "If it is true that a generation ago land-owners and capitalists so adjusted public arrangements as to ease themselves and to press unduly upon others, it is no less true that now artisans and laborers, through representatives who are obliged to do their bidding, are fast remoulding our social system in ways which achieve their own gain through others' loss."§ It is to prevent the evil of this reaction, it is in order that injustice may not be met by injustice, that the Holy Father gives such

* See *Dublin Review*, July, 1891, p. 154.

† *Ibid.*, § 21.

‡ Encycl., § 2.

§ "Justice," p. 192.

prudent counsel. The laborer may have grievances, but he does not better his position by leaving his work in an unfinished state, or by damaging or destroying property. Two wrongs cannot make a right. This were a violation of all justice; so the Pope regards it, and as such he rebukes it. While weighed down by consciousness of his grievances, it is the tendency of the workman to be reckless as regards the efficiency of his work and as regards the care of his employer's property. It is only his conscience, aroused and guided by religion, that can dictate to him the suppression of his personal spites and the doing of honest work under heavy provocation. It is only Christianity that can restrain men galled by a yoke that they would fain cast off. Christianity has been from the beginning the safeguard and guiding principle of society in its progress upward and onward.

The reformation of the workingman does not and can not come from without; it must come from within himself. "I tell you candidly," says Cobden, "that no people were ever yet elevated except through their own advancing wealth, morality, intelligence; and any one who tells the workingmen of this country that they may be raised in the social scale by any other process than that of reformation in themselves, is interested either in flattering or deceiving them."* It is this kind of reformation that the Holy Father seeks to bring about in the present Encyclical. Therefore it is that he appeals so strongly to the workman's sense of duty.

III.

While appealing to the workman's sense of duty, the Pope no less forcibly recognizes his rights.

1. He has the right to live; therefore is he entitled to food and shelter.

"Man's needs do not die out, but recur; satisfied to-day, they demand new supplies to-morrow. Nature therefore owes to man a storehouse that shall never fail, the daily supply of his daily wants."†

* "Speeches of Richard Cobden, M.P.," delivered during 1849, p. 171.

† Encycl., § 7.

This right is paramount to all other earthly and temporal rights. It is this right that justifies homicide in self-defence. It is this right that entitles a man to sufficient bodily sustenance, all human laws to the contrary notwithstanding. It need scarcely be said that the idle and slothful, or the burglar and footpad can find no sheltering cover beneath this right.

2. He has the right to remuneration for his labor.

"If one man hires out to another his strength or his industry, he does this for the purpose of receiving in return what is necessary for food and living; he thereby expressly proposes to acquire a full and real right not only to the remuneration, but also to the disposal of that remuneration as he pleases." *

His wages are the equivalent he receives for that part of himself which is wholly and exclusively his as a human being, his skill and his strength, and as such they enter the domain of his personal rights. He expends such portion of his earnings as is necessary for the support of himself and of those depending upon him. The remainder he holds or invests as seems best to him. And this leads to another recognized right.

3. He has the right to hold property. This right has grown with the growth of civilization. "Modern peoples," says Le Play, "who are most distinguished for their success and their superior influence, tend daily to give every species of property more and more a character exclusively personal. Under this form they consider it as the natural reward of labor and economy,—that is, of the two virtues on which chiefly rest the independence of individuals and the power of societies." † Therefore, the Holy Father tells us:

"Every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own. This is one of the chief points of distinction between man and the animal creation. . . . It is the mind, or the reason, which is the chief thing in us who are human beings; it is this which makes a human being human, and distinguishes him essentially and completely from the brute. And on this account—viz., that man alone among animals possesses reason—it must be within his right to have things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living beings

* *Encycl.*, § 5.

† "La Reforme Sociale en France," t. i. p. 230.

have them, but in stable and permanent possession; he must have not only things which perish in the using, but also those which, though used, remain for use in the future.”*

This is what is meant by property. It is something that remains one's own to use and dispose of through all changes of place, time, and circumstance.

This ownership extends to the land that man tills. The soil is the source whence man derives the sustenance of life. “Land,” says Cunningham, “is the property which of all others most calls out the virtues of prudence; the desire to realize it increases the will to work, and augments the endeavors of every workman in every trade, even in that of farming another's land.”† Therefore we may rightly say that upon land and by land does man live directly or indirectly. Especially does man find in ownership of land the great incentive to exertion. “Give a man,” says Arthur Young, “the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden; give him a nine years' lease of a garden, and he will convert it into a desert.”‡ And Leo XIII. thus discourses upon the character of this right of private ownership:

“Here again we have another proof that private ownership is according to Nature's law. For that which is required for the preservation of life, and for life's well-being, is produced in great abundance by the earth, but not until man has brought it into cultivation and lavished upon it his care and skill. Now, when man thus spends the industry of his mind and the strength of his body in procuring the fruits of Nature, by that act he makes his own that portion of Nature's field which he cultivates,—that portion in which he leaves, as it were, the impress of his own personality; and it cannot but be just that he should possess that portion as his own, and should have a right to keep it without molestation.”§

It is not disputed that there are limitations to that right in land determined by the interests of the common weal and the dictates of justice and equity that may not here be entered into.

* Encycl., § 6.

† “Conditions of Social Well-Being,” London, 1878, p. 123.

‡ “Travels in France,” vol. i. p. 51. § Encycl., § 9.

But clearly defined limitations are one thing; the breaking down of all limitations is quite another thing. And so the Holy Father condemns all proposals for communism in land or any other form of property as "emphatically unjust, because they would rob the lawful possessor, bring the state into a sphere that is not its own, and cause complete confusion in the community."* Mr. Herbert Spencer stands at the opposite pole of thought from the point of view of the Pope. He would ignore the supernatural; he believes in the evolution of society from the lower forms of life; the moral sense he evolves from experience, environment, and heredity. Now, in 1850, Mr. Herbert Spencer argued that as the land could not be equitably alienated from the community, it should, after compensating its existing holders, be re-appropriated by the community. But as the result of an additional forty years' study of social institutions, within which he has accumulated the experiences of all times and of every degree of civilization, he is led to retract his former position, and he now holds that the present system is the one entailing the least evil.† He has practically reached the same conclusion with the Holy Father.‡

Moreover, the mission of the Church has ever been to infuse into existing social institutions the principles of justice and charity, and to reform those institutions so far as they would be reformed, but not to overthrow them by any sudden revolution. Men must not grow impatient because she does not change her uniform line of action and become a medium of propagandism of their untried and impracticable theories. These theories are not new to her. Some of her own children in the early days of Christianity lived a life in which property was held in common. Her religious orders, from the days of St. Benedict up to the present day, have practised this community life. We see them now, as they have been seen in the past, men and women, renouncing name and fame

* *Encycl.*, § 4.

† "Justice," p. 270.

‡ See "Justice," on land-value, p. 92; on the injustice of communism, p. 200. Space will not permit us to quote these important conclusions.

and riches, consecrating themselves to the service of their neighbor, nursing the sick in hospitals, caring for the foundling and the orphan in asylums, teaching the children of the poor in parish schools, attending to the dead and the dying when occasion calls for their services on the battle-field or in the plague-stricken district, ministering to the spiritual wants of the people the world over, and in return each requiring only the food to sustain him and the clothing necessary to protect him against the inclemency of the weather. This community life is built upon a supernatural basis, and is followed only by those who have a special calling, known in the Church as a religious vocation.

The theory of community life upon a natural basis has been frequently revived with the revival of the writings of Plato. From the time of the Renaissance men are to be found from age to age advocating the holding of lands and goods in common. We need only mention the names of blessed Thomas More and the Dominican Campanella. Communism is not a new factor with which the Church has had to deal.

No doubt, were modern society established on another basis, as in Russia, for instance, in which "the communal principle, with its periodical re-allotment of the land, still remains intact,"*—did this relation of joint ownership exist throughout Christendom, the Pope would have recognized the situation, and addressed laborer and employer accordingly. But another order of things exists. Civilized communities everywhere recognize the principle of "individual ownership subject to state suzerainty."† Nor was the policy of the Church otherwise in the days of feudalism. Social relations were then established upon a different basis; the Church recognized them accordingly, and sought to counsel and guide men for the best. And so we may here continue the enumeration of the rights of the workman as contained in the Encyclical.

* Wallace, "Russia," vol. ii. p. 92.

† Herbert Spencer, "Justice," p. 270.

4. He has the right to live in the state of celibacy or to marry. Dealing with the workingman in his normal social and domestic relations, the Pope touches upon the state of celibacy only to recognize it. Men who formerly sneered at the Gospel counsel have now come to regard virginity as a natural right. Indeed, Schopenhauer goes to the other extreme, and considers it the kernel of Christianity. "Protestantism," he says, "since it has eliminated asceticism and its central point, the meritoriousness of celibacy, has already given up the inmost kernel of Christianity, and so far is to be regarded as a falling away from it. This has become apparent in our own day by the gradual transition of Protestantism into shallow rationalism." * The Church always recognized the place and the right of virginity. And so Leo XIII. tells us,—

"In choosing a state of life, it is indisputable that all are at full liberty either to follow the counsel of Jesus Christ as to virginity, or to enter into the bonds of marriage. No human law can abolish the natural and primitive right of marriage, or in any way limit the chief and principal purpose of marriage ordained by God's authority from the beginning—*Increase and multiply*.† Thus we have the family, the society of man's own household; a society limited indeed in numbers, but a true society anterior to any kind of state or nation, with rights and duties of its own, totally independent of the commonwealth."‡

Here the Holy Father puts the axe to the root of that Malthusian tree of political doctrine which has misled so many writers on political economy. To stunt or cut off the growth of population is a crime against the natural law. It traverses God's design in creating the human race. Any theory of life that would limit the number of children in a family would be in its very nature unjust and immoral. Doctrinaires are at sea in determining the number of people that a country can support. A slender population living in waste, unthrift, lack of forethought, will thrive less prosperously than many times the same population upon the same territory, living in self-restraint, decency, economy, and prudent calculation of the future. Malthusianism, in its accepted sense,

* "The World as Will and Idea," vol. iii. pp. 447, 448.

† Genesis i. 28.

‡ Encycl., § 13.

is false in its premises, immoral in its application, and misleading in its conclusions.

From parental rights and responsibilities the Holy Father deduces strongly and clearly, as an additional argument, the right of private ownership in property. He says,—

“That right of property, therefore, which has been proved to belong naturally to individual persons, must also belong to a man in his capacity of head of a family; nay, such a person must possess this right so much the more clearly in proportion as his position multiplies his duties. For it is a most sacred law of nature that a father must provide food and all necessities for those whom he has begotten; and similarly, nature dictates that a man’s children, who carry on, as it were, and continue his own personality, should be provided by him with all that is needful to enable them honorably to keep themselves from want and misery in the uncertainties of this mortal life. Now, in no other way can a father effect this except by the ownership of profitable property, which he can transmit to his children by inheritance.” *

The rights of the family are primary and anterior to all other social and state rights :

“Since the domestic household is anterior both in idea and in fact to the gathering of men into a commonwealth, the former must necessarily have rights and duties which are prior to those of the latter, and which rest more immediately on nature.” †

Mr. Herbert Spencer lays down the same principle when he tells us, “Fatherhood habitually implies ownership of the means by which children and dependents are supported.” ‡

5. Therefore the workingman possesses the right to support his family becomingly and decently. Mere existence, however much it may suit the brute creation, does not fulfil the whole meaning of man’s presence on earth. He and his are here for a higher purpose, and that purpose can, at least in a civilized community, be efficiently attained only by a becoming living. Therefore, speaking of the duties of the rich towards the poor, and defining the limits of those duties according to the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Holy Father says,—

“True, no one is commanded to distribute to others that which is required for his own necessities and those of his household; not even to give away what is

* Encycl., § 14.

† Ibid., § 15.

‡ “Justice,” p. 216.

reasonably required to keep up becomingly his position in life ; ' for no one ought to live unbecomingly.' " *

Therefore, any system, be it social or be it of the state, that would hinder, or would render impossible, the exercise of this right on the part of the head of the family to provide a becoming and decent living for those dependent on him, according to custom and locality, would in itself be radically wrong, and would require reform.

6. The workman has the right to guard and preserve his soul intact, and cultivate in it the virtues of his station, and look after its spiritual wants even as he looks after his bodily wants. When he gives his skill, his strength of muscle, the fruit of his intellectual labors for remuneration, he does not barter his soul. That is not in the market. Indeed, it is not man's to dispose of.

" Life on earth, however good and desirable in itself, is not the final purpose for which man is created; it is only the way and the means to that attainment of truth and that practice of goodness in which the full life of the soul consists. It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that sovereignty resides, in virtue of which man is commanded to rule the creatures below him, and to use all the earth and the ocean for his profit and advantage. . . . No man may outrage with impunity that human dignity which God Himself treats with reverence, nor stand in the way of the higher life which is the preparation for the eternal life of heaven. Nay, more; a man has no power over himself. To consent to any treatment which is calculated to defeat the end and purpose of his being is beyond his right; he cannot give up his soul to servitude, for it is not man's own rights which are here in question, but the rights of God, most sacred and inviolable." †

Noble words these, worthy of the great Pontiff and befitting the dignity of man. They are words that should be engraved on every human heart. The workman who embarks in any species of labor in which his soul is utterly neglected or ignored is doing himself a great injustice. He is overlooking one of his most imperative duties.

7. The workingman has the right to combine. It is a right that he holds in fee-simple. The state, in interfering with this right, when the object of combining is good, just, and in

* *Encycl.*, § 24.

† *Ibid.*, § 43.

no wise a danger to the public weal, is transgressing its natural bounds. "All-embracing state functions," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "characterize a low social type, and progress to a higher social type is marked by relinquishments of functions." * Man's rights—the rights of all society—"do not," in the words of the same author, "exist by authority of the state; but the state exists as a means of preserving them." † And therefore the Holy Father, reasoning on this very principle, says with no less force than aptness,—

"Particular societies, although they exist within the state, and are each a part of the state, nevertheless cannot be prohibited by the state absolutely as such. For to enter into 'society' of this kind is the natural right of man, and the state must protect natural rights, not destroy them; and if it forbids its citizens to form associations, it contradicts the very principle of its own existence; for both they and it exist in virtue of the same principle,—viz., the natural propensity of man to live in society." ‡

And yet, plain as the principle is, the history of all associations is one of struggle for proper recognition by the state. Look at the trades' unions in England. It was only in 1824 that they obtained release from state trammels and liberty to combine for mutual protection and advancement.§

IV.

These rights determine the relations of capital to labor. They imply certain claims on the part of the employed and certain duties and responsibilities on the part of the employer. The underlying principle determining these relations—the principle on the lines of which the whole Encyclical is planned—is this: That the workingman gives not only the skill and industry of his hands, for which he receives wages, but he gives a definite portion of his life as well, for which there is no stipulated compensation. And yet, this strain upon life is an essential factor, without which there can be no proper adjustment of the relations of labor and capital. It is a factor

* "Justice," p. 230.

† Ibid., p. 222.

‡ Encycl., § 55.

§ 5 Geo. iv. 95. See George Howell: "The Conflicts of Labor and Capital," p. 126.

that is of vital importance to society and the race. A certain portion of the wage-earner's life goes with the energy he throws into his work; a certain portion, also, of that life is renewed in his children. Upon the employer rests the responsibility of compensating for the life-strain in the only manner in which it can be done,—namely, by taking cognizance of the family and imparting to the home the proper degree of comfort. There is not simply question of the man whose life is being coined into capital; there is question of the whole rising generation; there is question of the well-being of society and the future of the human race. Children who become stunted through unwholesome and insufficient food and lack of proper clothing are not likely to become the progenitors of a robust generation.

1. The employer, therefore, in the interests of society, is bound in duty to so compensate the wage-earner as to enable him to bring up his family in comfort and decency. Here state interference is at times permissible, and even at times urgent as an act of self-preservation. A father rears children not for himself, but for the social body. It is a matter intimately concerning the common weal that these children be well cared for, morally and intellectually as well as physically.

“Justice demands that the interests of the poorer population be carefully watched over by the administration, so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may themselves share in the benefits they create,—that being housed, clothed, and enabled to support life, they may find their existence less hard and more endurable. It follows that whatever shall appear to be conducive to the well-being of those who work should receive favorable consideration. Let it not be feared that solicitude of this kind will injure any interest; on the contrary, it will be to the advantage of all; for it cannot but be good for the commonwealth to secure from misery those on whom it so largely depends.” *

Far into the future, at least for many years to come, there will continue a struggle on the part of the workingman to secure the highest possible wages, and on the part of the

* *Encycl.*, § 37.

employer to get his work done at the lowest possible cost. Times and seasons and circumstances regulate the price of labor. Other things being equal, it may be said that with increasing skill and expertness there must needs follow an increase in wages. But other things are seldom equal; they are a variable quantity, and among them may be mentioned the condition of the market, the relations of supply and demand, the competition of capital and the competition of labor. A constant quantity entering into the problem is the principle that every want which is satisfied creates other wants which remain to be satisfied. However, let wages vary as they may, it is no less important that there be a minimum beyond which the price of labor should not sink. And though the state cannot determine what that minimum should be, the state can see to it that, in all arbitrations between workmen and employers, the weaker is protected against unjust encroachments upon his rights by the stronger.

2. There are other responsibilities which the Encyclical would not have the employers ignore. The workman is not a slave; still less is he a mere animal. He has a will ever craving for the good, an intellect ever thirsting for knowledge, a soul with spiritual aspirations. He is religious as well as rational. He has a spiritual life to be sustained, a spiritual sense to be cultivated, vices to be eradicated, virtues to be fostered, evil inclinations to be overcome, a God to worship, and religious duties to practise. "The right to profess beliefs of the religious class," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "has for its concomitant the right to manifest such beliefs in acts of worship."* This manifestation requires times and seasons at the disposal of the workman. It is a sacred right which God sanctions for all.

"Whence follows the obligation of the cessation of work and labor on Sundays and certain festivals. This rest from labor is not to be understood as mere idleness, much less must it be an occasion of spending money out of vicious excess, as many would desire it to be; but it should be rest from labor consecrated by religion. Repose united with religious observance disposes man to

* "Justice," p. 137.

forget for a while the business of this daily life, and to turn his thoughts to heavenly things and to the worship which he so strictly owes to the Eternal Deity. It is this, above all, which is the reason and motive of the Sunday rest,—a rest sanctioned by God's great law of the ancient covenant, 'Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day,' and taught to the world by His own mysterious 'rest' after the creation of man: 'He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.' " *

The renewal of strength of body and peace of soul that accompanies the Sunday rest, when that rest is taken in the proper religious spirit, is a great boon for the man who has been in a constant strain of mind and body during the other six days of the week. In pleading for the Sunday's rest the Holy Father is also pleading for the prolongation of life as well as the strengthening of soul and consequent development of character.

3. In the relations between the workman and his employer there enter other considerations that cannot be ignored. For instance, there is a limit to the workman's power of endurance. He should not any day exhaust more of his muscle, or brain, or bodily strength than the night's rest and the daily food he takes are capable of restoring. Here the Encyclical is forcible and to the point :

" It is neither justice nor humanity so to grind men down with excessive labor as to stupefy their minds and wear out their bodies. Man's powers, like his general nature, are limited, and beyond these limits he cannot go. His strength is developed and increased by use and exercise, but only on condition of due intermission and proper rest. Daily labor, therefore, must be so regulated that it may not be protracted during longer hours than strength admits." †

These words place at hand a primary principle that should be employed in determining the hours of labor. Any species of work that exhausts a man's energies beyond the power of recuperation is inhuman. It forces him to premature death as effectively as disease or accident. Here the venerable Pontiff enters into details that reveal a careful study of the question. He tells us :

* Encycl., § 44.

† Ibid., § 45.

"How many and how long the intervals of rest should be, will depend on the nature of the work, on circumstances of time and place, and on the health and strength of the workman. Those who labor in mines and quarries, and in work within the bowels of the earth, should have shorter hours in proportion as their labor is more severe and more trying to health. Then, again, the season of the year must be taken into account; for not unfrequently a kind of labor is easy at one time which at another is intolerable or very difficult. Finally, work which is suitable for a strong man cannot reasonably be required from a woman or a child."*

And so, there can be no cast-iron rule determining the number of hours for work. The number that might be too exhausting for one kind of labor would scarcely suffice for another. Some trades and occupations might in justice call for an eight-hour law, while with others that measure of time would be inadequate for a day's work.

There are many reasons besides wear and tear of muscle that call for shorter hours. The horse and the ox claim food and rest on the same ground. Man is of social instincts, and there are many social duties which he should have time and opportunity to discharge. He should be in position to cultivate the social virtues. His family has a paramount claim on his time and attention. Look into the life of the ordinary workingman who leaves his home before sunrise, and returns late in the evening, fagged out, glad if he can take a hasty supper and retire to his much-needed rest for the night, having scarcely time to receive the greetings of his little ones, and far too fatigued to enjoy their company. Is this the life that a Christian father of family should lead? How can he thus become acquainted with his children, and learn their peculiarities of temper and character and the degree of their mental endowments? Moreover, the workingman owes it to himself to improve his condition not only in material and social concerns, but intellectually as well. This is a reading age, and in proportion as the workingman becomes better instructed does he require more enlightened direction. Undoubtedly a more perfect order of society will take into account his intellectual and moral wants as well as his physical wants. Even

* *Encycl.*, § 45.

at the present day, companies and corporations which have his well-being at heart have established reading-rooms and night-schools for his instruction and improvement. And the fact that man has so many other claims than the supplying of his purely physical wants, gives motive and meaning to the clamor for shorter hours and higher wages that goes forth from every quarter of the globe.

4. But if this progressive tendency which the workingman feels is to become a reality there must be co-operation on the part of his employers. The workingman cannot better his condition by his own unaided efforts. Wherever large manufacturing exist, the whole social basis is changed. The nature of this change I can best express in the language of one who gave many years to the study of this question in all its bearings. M. Louis Reybaud has noticed a twofold result of large factories: "On the one hand, the domestic hearth becomes deserted and the family spirit weakened; and on the other hand, a whole class becomes enrolled under a new condition of things, which industry has created and which it develops unceasingly; the head of the family becomes in a measure supplanted by the head of the establishment, and by degrees and by the very nature and force of things authority and responsibility shift. This is a grave situation."* It is a situation that capitalists dare shirk, only at the risk of their very existence as capitalists. The instinct of self-preservation, if no higher motive, should impel them to assume the responsibility.

V.

And now we come to the means by which the Pope would ameliorate the condition of the workingman. Acting in accord with the uniform policy of the Church, he is far from proposing any radical measures that would tend to revolutionize society, or for which this age is not prepared. In the future other ideas may prevail, other social conditions may exist, other grievances may be rampant, and these things

* "Études sur la Régime des Manufactures," Paris, 1859. Condition des Ouvriers en Soie. Intro. iv.

may call for other kinds of remedies. Should such conditions exist, the Church will be prepared to meet them. The Holy Father takes the existing state of things as it is, and shows how that state may be bettered to the advantage of both rich and poor. He cannot do away with poverty; he cannot destroy all difference and distinction between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the energetic and the indolent; he cannot suppress crime and injustice. He can only show the manner in which poverty may be diminished, and the poor may become more content and happy; the manner in which injustice may be lessened, and charity may the more abound.

1. First, and above all other means, the Holy Father places the religious influence of the Church.

“The Church does its utmost to teach and train men, and to educate them; and by means of its bishops and clergy it diffuses its salutary teachings far and wide. It strives to influence the mind and heart so that all may willingly yield themselves to be formed and guided by the commandments of God.” *

To the rich the Church counsels sympathy and charity and abundant almsgiving towards the poor.

“Whoever has received from the Divine bounty a large share of blessings, whether they be external and corporeal or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for the perfecting of his own nature, and at the same time that he may employ them, as the minister of God’s providence, for the benefit of others. ‘He that hath a talent,’ says St. Gregory the Great, ‘let him see that he hide it not; he that hath abundance, let him arouse himself to mercy and generosity; he that hath art and skill, let him do his best to share the use and utility thereof with his neighbor.’ ” †

Upon the poor and the destitute the Encyclical would impress the dignity of labor; that virtue and not riches constitutes worth; and that through patience and resignation under the trials and difficulties of life runs the road to happiness. Says the Holy Father:

“Christian morality, when it is adequately and completely practised, conduces of itself to temporal prosperity, for it merits the blessing of that God who is the

* *Encycl.*, § 28.

† *Ibid.*, § 24.

source of all blessings; it powerfully restrains the lust of possession and the lust of pleasure,—twin plagues, which too often make a man without self-restraint miserable in the midst of abundance; it makes men supply, by economy, for the want of means, teaching them to be content with frugal living, and keeping them out of the reach of those vices which eat up not merely small incomes, but large fortunes, and dissipate many a goodly inheritance.”*

This is not dogmatism; it is simply the assertion of fact, based upon the experience of ages. “During those epochs,” says Le Play, “that marked the prosperity of our race, the moral law as formulated in the Decalogue, and interpreted by the Gospel, gave well-being to the individual and peace to society.”†

Therefore does the Encyclical encourage the exercise of charity towards the poor, and discriminate in favor of true Christian charity as against organized state aid:

“No human methods will ever supply for the devotion and self-sacrifice of Christian charity. Charity as a virtue belongs to the Church; for it is no virtue unless it is drawn from the sacred heart of Jesus Christ; and he who turns his back on the Church cannot be near to Christ.”‡

It is this charity that has inspired men and women to abandon home and kin that they might devote themselves under the guidance of the Church, among every people, embracing all in a bond of universal brotherhood. The state, like Sir Launfal in the morning of life, may toss that “gruesome thing,” poor, ragged, leprous humanity, a piece of gold in scorn, but it is not the charity that brings God’s blessing with it. True religious charity is the same Sir Launfal, his heart touched with pity, beholding, in the beggar who has endured the world’s buffets and scorns, the image of Him who was poor in life and died on a cross in His love for man, sharing with that beggar his single crust, and breaking for him the ice on the streamlet’s brink.

* Encycl., § 30.

† “La Reforme Sociale en France,” 1878, t. iv. p. 3.

‡ Encycl., § 32.

“Not what we give, but what we share—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.”

2. But the Holy Father, in his desire to make the world better, also recognizes the necessity of employing human agencies. He next proposes that the state step in and protect the interests of the laboring classes against any condition of things by which life, health, or morals were imperilled.

“It is only by the labor of the workingman that states grow rich. Justice, therefore, demands that the interests of the poorer population be carefully watched over by the administration, so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may themselves share in the benefits they create—that being housed, clothed, and enabled to support life, they may find their existence less hard and more endurable.” *

Farther on, he enters into details concerning those things in which state interference may be well taken:

“If by a strike, or other combination of workmen, there should be imminent danger of disturbance to the public peace, or if circumstances were such that among the laboring population the ties of family were relaxed; if religion were found to suffer through the workmen not having time and opportunity to practise it; if in workshops and factories there were danger to morals through the mixing of the sexes or from any occasion of evil; or if employers laid burdens upon the workmen which were unjust, or degraded them with conditions that were repugnant to their dignity as human beings; finally, if health were endangered by excessive labor or by work unsuited to sex or age,—in these cases there can be no question that, within certain limits, it would be right to call in the help and authority of the law. The limits must be determined by the nature of the occasion which calls for the law’s interference,—the principle being this, that the law must not undertake more, or go further, than is required for the remedy of the evil, or the removal of the danger.” †

These are all cases calling for state legislation. Without legislation, individual capitalists, in their efforts to reform the communities they control, might be seriously placing themselves at a disadvantage with their competitors. Placing all competitors on the same plane, legislation at the same time protects the individual against monopolies; and in so far as

* Encycl., § 37.

† Ibid., § 39.

it achieves this is it a good. The cautiousness with which the Holy Father limits and hedges in state interference is noteworthy. Personal rights are not to be infringed. Men are to retain liberty of action.

On the other hand, the trades' unions and the labor associations can aid the state considerably by advising the kind of legislation required as regards the manifold relations of capital and labor. It is thus that the Trade Union Congress of England has its Parliamentary Committee to watch over the interests of labor in Parliament. That committee represents over two millions of workmen. It has been of great assistance in producing legislative measures that were practical and easy of application for the reason that they were drawn up or recommended by men who knew where lay the real seat of the evil that was to be remedied. Heretofore the rich man has been the sole legislator, and as a rule he has legislated in his own behalf.

3. Another remedy the Holy Father suggests is organizing into associations. But His Holiness distinguishes between associations that are bound by secret oaths and led by invisible leaders and associations that are based upon Christian principles, accompanied by Christian practices, and as solicitous for the well-being of the soul as for the well-being of the body.

"Speaking summarily, we may lay it down as a general and perpetual law that workmen's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at,—that is to say, for helping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost in body, mind, and property. It is clear that they must pay special and principal attention to piety and morality, and that their internal discipline must be directed precisely by these considerations; otherwise they entirely lose their special character, and come to be very little better than those societies which take no account of religion at all." *

Having laid the foundation of all organization in religion, the Holy Father next counsels the formation of Catholic societies for the benefit and protection of the Catholic work-

* *Encycl*, § 61.

ingman. In France, Austria, Germany, and Belgium there are such Catholic organizations, powerful and wide-spread in their influence, in which the mutual support of the members extends to their spiritual concerns. In the United States labor has been organized upon lines independent of creed or nationality.

These counsels of the Holy Father may be called socialism. Be the name what it may, certain it is that His Holiness is commending only the legitimate use of a natural right. The workmen's associations can become a great power for evil as well as for good. Organized labor is the only means of protection of the poor against the organized capital of the rich. It gives the inferior workman a chance to live. Looking the subject full in the face, we are forced to admit that it involves many issues which are apparently contradictory. Organized labor, for instance, destroys competition, and in destroying competition it depreciates the value of skilled labor. Again, organized labor coerces, and anything like coercion easily becomes injustice. Now, the man who remains outside the association is liable to persecution. It is natural that the non-union workingman should receive but slight consideration at the hands of his union brother, for he is practically reaping the benefits of the union without contributing to its support. He indirectly and to a certain extent enjoys its protection. Furthermore, not infrequently do labor associations become despotic and interfere to the extent of attempting to direct as regards ways and means, and even the very course of industry, to the ruin of respectable firms. Such acts terminate in grave injustice. And though associations, like individuals, may discriminate in a spirit of self-protection, they must always be prepared to give others the liberty of action that they claim for themselves.

Thus does a delicate system of action and interaction run through the principle of combination. It is a system that calls for forethought and moderation. It is not in itself a complete remedy for the evils under which the workingman suffers, nor is it a solution of all the issues of industrialism. "It is not contended," says Mr. George Howell, "that trade-

unions are capable of solving the great industrial questions which agitate the public mind. Their work is at best only a temporary expedient for dealing with labor questions as they arise."* And Le Play assures us that in the midst of its various transformations, the problem that organized labor has to solve is always the same,—namely, "to establish the security of the workingman upon the permanence of labor."† This is why the Holy Father, in asserting the new methods of reform and social regeneration, does not lose sight of the old methods by which communities have grown and strengthened in the ways of civilization.

"If society is to be cured now, in no other way can it be cured but by a return to the Christian life and Christian institutions. When a society is perishing, the true advice to give to those who would restore it is, to recall it to the principles from which it sprung; for the purpose and perfection of an association is to aim at and to attain that for which it was formed, and its operation should be put in motion and inspired by the end and object which originally gave it its being. So that to fall away from its primal constitution is disease; to go back to it is recovery."‡

4. While recognizing the fact that, under the present strained relations between organized capital and organized labor, strikes must needs occur, the Holy Father does not counsel them. And yet strikes have been hitherto considered the right arm of workingmen's associations. But the world has had ample demonstration that the tendency of strikes is invariably towards destruction. They entail untold misery and suffering and loss of property. Their paralyzing effects are far-reaching. It is always a matter of deep public concern to see that they are speedily ended. Instead of strikes the Holy Father would substitute arbitration and co-operation:

"If it should happen that either a master or a workman deemed himself injured, nothing would be more desirable than that there should be a committee composed of honest and capable men of the association itself, whose duty it should be, by the laws of the association, to decide the dispute."§

* See Mr. Howell's recent work, "Trade-Unionism, New and Old."

† "La Reforme Sociale en France," t. iii. p. 15.

‡ Encycl., § 29.

§ Ibid., § 62.

He would have amicable settlement, conducted in a Christian spirit. He would have every association self-supporting, self-protecting, and promotive of the general good.

“Among the purposes of a society should be to try to arrange for a continuous supply of work at all times and seasons; and to create a fund from which the members may be helped in their necessities, not only in cases of accident, but also in sickness, old age, and misfortune.” *

Associations have no meaning, no definite reason for their existence, unless they be such as are here described. There is here no place for exorbitant demands, or clamor for the destruction of some industries that others may flourish, or of what Mr. Herbert Spencer calls “encouragement of the delusion that it only requires union for workers to get what terms they please, prompting suicidal demands.” † Undoubtedly that were a more perfect state of affairs in which the workman needed no associations, and in which all was harmony between the employer and the employed. But such is not the state now existing. And so, as Mr. Thornton has well shown in his ably-written book, the workingman’s associations have come to stay, and are to be reckoned with in the immediate future. ‡ Greed for gain may be modified and injustice may be diminished, but while human nature remains human nature neither greed nor injustice can be wholly crushed out. Only the associations organized on principles of equity and Christian charity will be of lasting benefit to the workman. Such are the associations recommended and encouraged in the Encyclical.

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NEW YORK.

* Encycl., § 62.

† “Justice,” p. 245.

‡ See “On Labor,” by William T. Thornton, Book iii. pp. 187-362.